

Basic Situation

- The beginning introduces the characters, the setting, and some background information.
- The point of view is first person. You should include information about your thoughts and feelings during the incident you're describing.

Rising Action

- The rising action establishes the conflict in the story.
- The writer uses dialogue to keep the story interesting.
- The author continues to reveal her thoughts, feelings, and reactions to what's happening.

Climax

- This is the moment of greatest tension or feeling in the story.
- Notice how the author talks about her thoughts and feelings.

Resolution

- Figurative language is used.
- The ending suggests the significance of this event to the author.

My Last Goodbye

My life was perfect when I was twelve years old. I had a family, including my older sister, Chrissy, and a little brother, Patrick, whom I loved greatly. Spring was coming, and I was excited about another summer with Grandma. She and I did a lot of things together. We used to talk to each other, go shopping, tell each other our secrets, and garden together. My life was going great. She was retiring this year, so that meant more time with her.

Then, on April 11, 1994, at 10:00 p.m., we were all going to bed when the phone rang. My mom answered; my uncle was calling to say that Grandpa had just taken Grandma to the hospital. My mom woke Chrissy to tell her to watch us and that she and my dad would be back soon. When Chrissy asked where they were going, Mom said "to the hospital." Chrissy asked, "Why?" Mom replied, "Grandma is sick, but she'll be okay." Needless to say, I sat on the stairs listening to everything. I can remember that night as if it were a movie that I watch every day.

My life fell apart that night. The next morning I was told that my grandma had had a heart attack and that she was gone. My heart stopped at that moment. No one asked me if I was okay or even sat with me. I tried to be strong but even my father cried. I just kept asking myself, "Why her?" I was so mad that I had not even gotten to say goodbye. I still thought that I could keep my feelings hidden until someone said of me, "This is the one that will miss her the most." I couldn't control my feelings anymore. I burst into tears. It finally hit me: She was gone forever. All I had left were memories in the garden—the hours we spent planting flowers and taking care of them. Although my aunt and I later tried to work in the garden together, it just wasn't the same.

I believe my grandma is a star watching over me, just like she would be if she were still here. No one could ever fill that part of my heart that died with her. Still, my grandma would have wanted me to be strong and happy like her, even though there are good times and bad. My family and friends love me for who I am and support me for what I do, as I know my grandma would, too.

Steps to Writing an Autobiographical Narrative

1. Read and understand the prompt or writing directions. What are you being asked to write about?

Example:

Autobiographical Narrative Writing Task

In this writing test, you will write an autobiographical story. Your writing will be scored on how well you:

- tell a story about an autobiographical event;
- develop a plot with a beginning, middle, and end;
- develop a setting and characters;
- use appropriate strategies such as action, descriptive detail, and dialogue to make your story interesting; and
- indicate why this event was meaningful to you

2. Decide on your topic. What incident are you going to write about? Keep it small—an hour, a moment, a day. Make sure you can express why this moment was significant to you.

3. Consider the conflict. What problem did you face? How did you overcome this problem?

4. Set the scene. Where did this incident take place? What specific sensory details can you include to show the reader the setting?

5. Plan the complications. What was the sequence of events? How will you connect the events so they flow smoothly together?

6. Determine the climax. Don't skip on the climax. This should be the most exciting, thrilling, or meaningful moment in your story.

7. Wrap it up with a resolution. The ending should flow naturally from the rest of the story. Clearly state why this incident was important to you.

8. Revise. Did you start strong? Did your first sentences focus on describing the setting, getting inside the narrator (your) thoughts, or with dialogue? Do you use vivid details to describe the action, setting, and characters? Did you include dialogue? Do your sentences flow well? Do you use transitional words and phrases to connect ideas and events?

9. Proofread and edit. Check your spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Is the narrative's verb tense consistent? Are all names of people and places spelled correctly and capitalized?

10. Write your final draft. Use blue or black ink. Skip lines. Write on one side of the paper only. Include a title on the top line.

11. Read your essay one last time before you turn it in. Look for careless spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors, especially omitted words or letters. Cross out errors neatly with a single line and write the correction above.